

In the last 50 years our environment has become increasingly more polluted. Tens of thousands of toxic chemicals are introduced into our environment daily, resulting in a greater human and animal toxic burden than ever before. No matter how carefully we are living our lives we all have some level of exposure. Add to this the use of alcohol, tobacco, prescription and non-prescription drugs, pesticides and the typical American diet high in fats and sugars, and it is no surprise that chronic diseases are on the rise as our bodies are faced with the never ending challenge of eliminating these substances.

We come in contact with environmental pollutants by means of ingestion, inhalation and absorption through the skin on a regular basis through food, water, air, cosmetics, and other sources. There are many symptoms commonly linked to toxicity with headache, skin rashes, mood changes, hormonal imbalance, joint pain and fatigue being some of the most common.

The five main organs of detoxification are the liver, kidneys, intestines, skin and lungs, with the liver being the main detoxifier of the body. Its role is to metabolize and eliminate numerous substances including, toxins from the environment, food, drugs, as well as hormones and cellular waste made by the body during normal functioning. When the liver becomes 'backed up' with environmental toxins it can no longer efficiently process natural waste products and hormones, leading to ever increasing hormone imbalances, thyroid dysfunction, memory deficits, and cancer among many others conditions.

On the bright side there are many things we can do to avoid toxic exposure and support the body in the elimination of the toxins we come across on a daily basis. Below are some simple everyday habits you can apply to your life to ensure proper detoxification.

#### Stimulate all Organs of Elimination: Movement

Exercise goes way beyond helping our body detox through sweat elimination, it also increases oxygen delivery to all tissues, increases metabolism, improves elimination from the bowels, increases liver function, stimulates the flow of lymph fluid and circulation(detoxifies blood), and burns fat. Fat is the main storage place for any chronic toxic build up we may have in our bodies. Obesity is almost always associated with toxicity. Loosing weight will reduce fat and thereby the toxic load. Take caution when starting a new exercise regimen. Start slowly and work up to an intensity level that increases your heart rate and makes you sweat. **Your ultimate goal should be at least 1 hour of heart rate-increasing movement 5 days a week.**

#### Support the Kidney: Drink Water

This is the best therapy for your kidney's and supports the flushing of toxins out through the urine. **Drink at least the equivalent of half of your body weight in ounces of water everyday.** You should have an additional glass of water for every hour of exercise, every alcoholic beverage or cup of coffee. Although, during any detox program you should slowly wean off of and eventually eliminate caffeine and alcohol in order to give the body a proper period of rest and shift of focus on unnatural toxic substances. You should also limit the amount of water you drink during meals to a glass or less to avoid diluting stomach acid.

#### Support the Liver and Intestines: Sleep

During sleep is when the body has a chance to recover and regenerate. The liver and other detoxification processes are most active during the sleeping hours. Going to bed and waking up at the same time everyday is rejuvenating and balancing to the body especially the endocrine (hormonal) system. Every hour of sleep before midnight is worth 2 hours of sleep after midnight. So, the earlier you can get to bed the better. **I highly recommend getting 7-8.5 hours of sleep every night for optimal health.**

#### Support the Lungs: Deep Breathing

The detoxification and healing systems work the most optimally when mind and body are in a relaxed state. Breathing is not only a direct way to eliminate toxins through the lungs, it is also the best way to calm the body and the mind. Inhale and exhale through your nose filling your abdomen and chest. Try to exhale as long as possible before inhaling again. Breathing may be done many times throughout the day. Try to do at least 100 deep breaths each day. Incorporating a yoga practice to optimize health, breathing and relaxation is a great way to optimize health overall.

### Stimulate the Lymphatic System: Dry Skin Brushing

The skin is a major organ of detoxification and is often ignored. Dry skin brushing is a therapy that helps to stimulate lymphatic circulation, remove dead skin cells, keep the skin soft and youthful, assist in the removal of toxins, and generally improve health and vitality. To do this thoroughly brush all of your skin using short, very light, frequent strokes towards the heart for 45-60 seconds. It is best to do this on dry skin before bed. Use a vegetable fiber brush, natural sponge, or loofah sponge.

### Stimulate the Skin: Infrared Sauna

The skin is the largest organ of elimination. Every time you sweat you release toxins through the skin. When you start using a sauna start slowly with just a few minutes in the beginning and build up from there. Sauna therapy may not be for everyone. Make sure you have discussed this with your healthcare practitioner before you begin a sauna program.

### Cleanse the Intestines: Eat a Detoxifying Diet

On a detox, food and drink that may place stress on the liver and kidneys such as alcohol, caffeine, sugar and red meat are out of bounds. The result, is that the body has time and energy to eliminate toxins that have built up, leading to a healthier digestive system, clearer skin and eyes and an overall feeling of good health. When we eat a diet high in fats, meats, dairy products, refined foods, and chemicals, detoxification becomes more necessary. Eating a nontoxic diet as outlined below will help most of us detoxify somewhat and bring us into better balance, with more vitalized cells, organs, and body.

- Eat organic foods whenever possible.
- Drink filtered water.
- Rotate foods, especially common allergens, such as milk products, eggs, wheat, and yeast foods.
- Eat a natural, local, seasonal cuisine.
- Include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, and, for omnivores, add some low-fat dairy products, and fresh, wild-caught fish (not shellfish) and organic poultry.
- Cook in iron, stainless steel, glass, or porcelain.
- Avoid or minimize red meats, cured meats, organ meats, refined foods, canned foods, sugar, salt, saturated fats, coffee, alcohol, and nicotine.